



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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PROPOSALS TO WILDLIFE RULES AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is accepting comments on a series of proposed changes to many hunting seasons and licenses on its website at www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/.

The proposed changes are subject to approval from the Natural Resource Commission. A public meeting to discuss the proposed rules is set for April 18 and will be carried over the Iowa Communications Network at 18 satellite sites across Iowa. The list and descriptions of proposed changes and meeting locations is on the Iowa Department of Natural Resources website www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/.

The DNR is proposing changes to the antlerless deer license quotas, including eliminating the antlerless licenses in 26 counties, primarily in northwest and north central Iowa. The DNR is also proposing to require hunters who bag a deer or wild turkey to call a phone number to report their harvest. Spring and fall turkey seasons would be included.

A proposed change to the landowner tenant free deer and turkey licenses would require landowners and tenants to pre-register before receiving the free licenses. Registration would be available at www.iowadnr.com or by calling a toll free number.

Proposed changes for the 2007 Spring turkey hunting season would remove the zones on the Iowa State Forests and allow Iowa residents to hunt statewide each season. Other spring turkey hunting changes include changing the daily bag limit to one bearded turkey per license, which would only affect hunters in the fourth season, who have not yet bagged a turkey.

Lastly, the DNR is proposing a trapping season river otter and has a set of dates for waterfowl hunting seasons, which is subject to final approval from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in August.

Each comment has a limit of 500 characters, but there is no limit on the number of comments someone may submit on the DNR proposals.

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FISHING REGULATIONS TO BE RELAXED AT VIKING LAKE AND COLD SPRINGS LAKE

LEWIS - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources will relax some of the fishing regulations at Viking Lake (Montgomery County) and Cold Springs Lake (Cass County) beginning April 1, 2006. This will allow anglers to harvest fish before a planned September draw-down and renovation at Viking Lake and mid-October renovation at Cold Springs Lake. Water levels in both lakes will remain normal until after Labor Day weekend, only Viking Lake will be lowered at that time.

Anglers will be allowed to use an unlimited number of hooks and lines to harvest any size or number of largemouth bass, channel catfish, and walleye. Anglers must still have a fishing license, remain in sight of all lines, and follow all other fishing regulations and park rules. Liberalized fishing regulations for these two lakes will remain effect until September 11, 2006 for Viking Lake and October 10, 2006 for Cold Springs Lake.

An over abundant population of yellow bass in Viking Lake and crappies in Cold Springs Lake has lead to dramatic reductions in both the numbers and the quality of all other sport fish. The reduced number of sport fish has lead to dramatic reductions of anglers using the lakes and therefore a substantial loss of economic revenue to the area economy.

Fish will be restocked throughout the fall and following spring.

It is very important that anglers never transport yellow bass to any other water system and notify DNR Fisheries personnel of any known populations.

For more information on Viking Lake contact the Montgomery County Conservation Officer, Dan Cain at 712-520-0507, Viking Lake Park Ranger, Gary Poen at 712-621-1950, or the Iowa DNR Fisheries at 712-769-2587.

For more information on Cold Springs Lake contact the Cass County Conservation Officer, Eric Sansgaard at 712-520-0303 or the Iowa DNR Fisheries at 712-769-2587.

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[Electronic photos available]

HOMEGROWN MAPLE SYRUP STEEPED IN TRADITION

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

CASTALIA---Lengthening daylight hours, rising temps, melting snow. All sure signs that spring really is just around the corner.

For work crews at northeast Iowa's Green's Sugarbush, the impending change of seasons is also a sure signal that the maple sap is rising and it's time to hit the timbers for another sugar run.

Green's Sugarbush is one of Iowa's oldest, continuously run businesses. So old, in fact, that syrup crews have never missed a single season since the first pail of maple sap was collected here in 1851.

"My grandparents were the first ones to collect sap and make syrup here; and that was ten years before the start of the Civil War," says Dale Green, current owner of Green's Sugarbush. "I think that -- besides its age -- the thing that makes our business unique is that we've been able to maintain tradition. Most operations, especially the ones out East, have gone to vacuum assist pipelines that gather sap mechanically. Here, we still use pails and horse drawn tanks to gather sap. Essentially, things are still done exactly the same as they were a hundred years ago."

Continuous cycles of freezing and thawing set the stage for a perfect syrup run. Maple sap returns to its roots as temperatures fall below freezing each night, and tin pails catch the liquid as it rises the next day. Entirely at the mercy of the weather; a good season usually runs around nine or ten days.

"Our timbers are all natural, and we only tap hard [sugar] maples," says Green. "We don't plant any trees, the maples just naturally reseed themselves. It's a slow process and it takes a tree about 80 years to reach the 12 to 14-inch diameter that will allow us to begin tapping."

Once the run begins workers take to the timbers daily, methodically gathering the sap collected in 2,000 pails. The sap is poured into a horse drawn tank wagon which conveys the clear liquid back to Sugarbush headquarters where it is slowly heated, then boiled, filtered, and canned. It takes 40 to 45 gallons of sap to make one gallon of pure maple syrup.

There are no LP tanks at Green's Sugarbush. Instead, the entire process is accomplished solely through the use of hand-split, wood heat. When everything is right, the operation can evaporate around 275 gallons of sap per hour. Syrup is considered finished when it reaches a temperature 7 degrees above the boiling point of water.

As each year's sap run reaches a conclusion, the Sugarbush celebrates the occasion by inviting the public to a Sunday morning pancake and sausage feed. In addition to enjoying a hearty meal, visitors are treated to a firsthand glimpse of how Iowa maple syrup is made. There are also horse drawn wagon rides and tours of syrup processing.

"For some people it's like a tradition," says Karen Green, co-owner of the Sugarbush. "They show up every year to eat pancakes and buy some syrup. We've even had a few people show up from foreign countries, and they are really amazed. This is strictly a North American thing and isn't done in Europe."

This year's pancake feeds are scheduled for March 26 and April 2.

IF YOU GO:

Located between Postville and Castelia, Green's Sugarbush is easy to find. To get there take Hwy. 52 [west of Postville] to 120th Ave. Turn north on 120th Ave. In about 2.4 miles the road will become 111th Ave. The gravel curves and you are now traveling in a more or less easterly direction. There is a pasture to your left [north]. Watch for a huge bald eagle's nest in the top of a big cottonwood. [Look closely and you will see the female already incubating this year's clutch of eggs.] Just past the eagle's nest, the road curves left [north]. Green's Sugarbush is located just on the left hand side of the road as you head north.

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COMMITMENT TO PROGRAM HELPS LANDOWNERS REDUCE LOCAL DEER NUMBERS

CHARITON – Brian Wolf was tired of seeing his hard work and money to re-establish oak and walnut trees on his tree farm get gobbled up by hungry deer. Dairying and tree farming is his livelihood, and even as a deer hunter, Wolf could not let his hobby get in the way of his business.

Wolf, who lives near Bankston, started working with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources wildlife depredation team and together they developed a plan that required a three-year commitment from Wolf, and for his hunters to shoot primarily does. Each year hunters would take 22 to 25 does off Wolf's property and a neighboring property, as well as two or three really nice bucks.

The contract ran its course, but the philosophy of actively managing the deer herd continued and the commitment has paid off. The trees have grown to above browse height, Wolf is continuing to plant new trees, the deer herd has shrunk and, a side benefit, the bucks are producing trophy racks, including “two or three wall hangers a year,” Wolf said.

Controlling the size of the deer herd, locally or at the state level, requires a long-term commitment and a fundamental change in minds of the deer hunters and landowners. Once the herd has been reduced to an acceptable size, hunters and landowners must keep at least an equal doe-buck balance in the annual harvest to maintain the success. The Iowa DNR’s depredation program began in 1997, and landowners who are willing to commit to the program, will see results.

“This program works for people who are willing to listen to us,” said Bill Bunger, wildlife biologist in the depredation program. Bunger works with landowners from the western two-thirds of Iowa. He said the key is to use all the seasons available to deer hunters and to keep constant pressure on the deer.

Ron Brown, who farms near Corning, was in the depredation program for four years. Brown started hunting only during the shotgun seasons, but progressed to include the bow season, early muzzleloader and the bonus late season. “We had to go to other season to get our best control,” he said. In 2005, Brown said hunters took 41 does on his farm.

Brown said he has found that some guys just can’t get themselves to shoot a doe, and those hunters don’t come back to his farm. Others, like five bow hunters from Woodward, accept the rules Brown has set for those wanting access to his land. Brown asks hunters to take two does before they take a buck. The bow hunters took 11 does from the farm. “I thought they did their part alright,” Brown said. “I was happy and they were happy.”

But he faces a different problem. Brown has a new neighbor who owns land to the south and southwest, and does not allow anyone to hunt on the property. That lack of access and hunting pressure provides a private refuge for deer to escape.

The new landowner lives out of state and only comes to Iowa to hunt trophy bucks. The landowner also operates as an outfitter, Brown said, charging up to \$2,500 per person to hunt. So, with this large piece of land with restricted access, Brown is faced with a tough situation and can only do so much to control deer numbers from the outside.

Changing the mindset to shooting does is good for the herd is a difficult task. If Brown’s new neighbor would allow does to be taken, he may find it improves his trophy deer.

Having the faith to stick with a management plan, and seeing the work and dedication come together makes landowners happy, deer hunters happy, and give credibility to neighbors facing similar issues.

Todd Boyse, who farms near Wellman, spent three hours walking his land with Greg Harris, a wildlife biologist with the DNR's depredation program, and during that walk, Boyse saw signs of crop damage as well as signs of stress on the deer herd itself.

Boyse knew he had a lot of deer. He said it was nothing to see 20 to 40 deer each night from his tree stand and could only imagine the number of deer just out of sight. He joined the program two years ago with a goal of taking 45 does, in addition to a few big bucks. The first year, they harvested 57 does and five button bucks. "It was just that easy," Boyse said.

The key is to have a group of people who understand the project and are willing to shoot does. The second year was a little more difficult, but hunters still took 49 does and seven button bucks. "We saw fewer deer, but it was our best buck harvest, antler-wise," Boyse said. The racks on four of the 11 bucks taken from the farm in 2005 scored 160 points or higher, including one that scored in the 180s.

Boyse has seen the results on the ground after only two years in the program, and will now lower the number of antlerless deer to be taken in 2006. He is now working with his neighbors who have similar issues with deer. "It's been very successful in neighborly relations and to limit the deer population," he said. Boyse stresses that deer management is a commitment and said some people simply do not like to put in the time.

"I want to take a resident deer from that area, not one pushed in," he said. Boyse and his group hunt early muzzleloader, bow and the first day or two of the first shotgun season.

"I'm a trophy deer guy and understand the work that goes in to it [deer management]," he said. "We've had great success, and the folks coming down to hunt are having a great time."

Part of the acceptance of shooting antlerless deer has been the addition of the Help Us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program, which will be entering its fourth year in fall 2006.

"If it wasn't for the HUSH program, we couldn't do what we're doing, it's that simple," said Brown, who donated a number of deer to Corning Meat Processing Service, in Corning. "If we didn't have that, nobody would shoot them [does] at all."

Hunters may donate any legally taken deer to a participating meat locker, which processes the deer for the Food Bank of Iowa or for nearby prisons. The locker receives \$60 for each deer processed. The money for processing comes from a \$1 fee added to deer licenses. A local food bank collects the meat and distributes the venison to families

in need. In a few areas of the state, some venison goes to a nearby prison if the local food pantries cannot handle the volume.

Sidebar: Depredation Program Handles More Than Just Deer

Chariton – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources wildlife depredation program was called to help remove a growing Canada goose population near the Des Moines Airport.

Over the years, a group comprised of staff from the DNR, the Des Moines International Airport, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Des Moines Waterworks would harass the waterfowl, break up nests and oil eggs to discourage the waterfowl from calling the Des Moines Waterworks ponds home.

Finally, in June 2005, in the early dawn hours, the staff rounded up the geese and took them to a processing plant and made the geese available through the Food Bank of Iowa.

Bill Bunger, wildlife depredation biologist with the Iowa DNR, said everyone involved in the discussions concluded the only solution was to remove the geese permanently.

“Our goal is to reduce future waterfowl-aircraft collisions and we looked at every way to solve the issue, but we kept facing the same obstacle that these geese would return to Waterworks park. As a group, we decided this was the only viable solution,” Bunger said. “We did not arrive at this decision lightly and we feel this is in the best interest of public safety.”

For more information, contact Bill Bunger, wildlife depredation biologist with the Iowa DNR for the western two-thirds of Iowa, at 641-774-8563, or Greg Harris, wildlife depredation biologist with the Iowa DNR for the eastern one-third of Iowa, at 319-653-2135.

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Conservation Officers Recognized for Outstanding Work

DES MOINES - Several officers with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau were recognized for outstanding service by different conservation organizations for outstanding service at its 2006 annual meeting.

Shikar-Safari Outstanding Wildlife Officer of the Year Award went presented to Officer Chris Flynn, who covers Jefferson and Van Buren counties. Flynn was recognized for aggressively protecting wildlife from violators, assisting local sheriff's departments on pursuits leading to the apprehension of two burglary suspects.

Flynn assisted with the Missouri Department of Conservation on several deer cases, and with fellow officers in southeast Iowa on a major deer case and an illegal commercial fishing case.

Whitetails Unlimited Outstanding Officer of the Year Award went to Officer Craig Roberg, who covers Decatur and Clarke counties. Roberg was recognized for uncovering a poaching operation in Decatur County that resulted in five local men being cited with 49 charges of illegally taking deer. The fines and liquidated damages totaled more than \$53,000.

National Wild Turkey Federation Outstanding Officer of the Year Award went to Officer Craig Cutts, who covers Warren County. Cutts was recognized for his role in several successful wild turkey cases, including a non-resident guilty of several illegal turkey violations and additional deer violations. Other successful cases include catching a poacher in the process of consuming an illegally taken wild turkey, along with additional violations. Lastly, a case made possible from an informant where, upon approaching the individual, the suspect confessed to the case, and when pressed, confessed to illegally taking two more turkeys in the last two weeks.

Outstanding Cases of the Year was awarded to Officer Eric Sansgaard [Cass and Adair counties], Officer Mike Macke [Jones and Jackson counties], Officer Dave Tierney [Harrison and Shelby counties] and Officer Ed Kocal [Scott County].

Sansgaard was recognized for outstanding effort and professionalism during the investigation, apprehension and successful prosecution of two major deer cases resulting in multiple violations, fines and civil penalties of \$ 17,163, and forfeiture of various equipment.

Macke was recognized for outstanding effort and professionalism during the investigation, apprehension and successful prosecution of a major deer case resulting in multiple violations, fines and civil penalties of nearly \$ 63,000, and forfeiture of various equipment.

Tierney was recognized for outstanding effort and professionalism during the investigation, apprehension and successful prosecution of a deer case involving individuals from North Carolina resulting in multiple violations, fines and civil penalties of nearly \$50,000, and forfeiture of equipment valued at nearly \$5,000.

Kocal was recognized for outstanding effort and professionalism during the investigation, apprehension and successful prosecution of multiple deer cases involving non-residents resulting in multiple violations and significant fines and civil penalties and enhancing our working relationship with those other states.

Special Fisheries Enforcement Award was presented to Officer Jeff Harrison, Lee County, and Illinois Conservation Police Officer Mike Schnell for their work to stop four

men from removing walleyes and other game fish from their 1,200-foot seine used to harvest rough fish under a commercial fishing license. The fines and forfeited property totaled \$33,000.

Iowa Bowhunter's Association and Turn-In Poachers (TIP) Conservation Officer of the Year was awarded to Officer Kyle Jensen, Lucas and Wayne counties, for the significant number of successful cases that were made because of citizen calls to the TIP hotline.

Outstanding Boating Law Enforcement and Water Safety Education Award was presented to Officer Shawn Meier, Cedar County, for his work in assisting in water patrol on Coralville Reservoir and the Mississippi River. Meier would work with fellow officers to determine how to detect boaters who are operating a boat under the influence.

Outdoor Heritage Award was presented to Officer Dave Elledge, Fayette County, for his passion, dedication and commitment in promoting outdoor education. Elledge has a long-standing commitment to the Iowa hunter education program, is routinely involved with promoting hunting, fishing and Iowa's natural resources.

Waterfowl Enforcement Award was presented to Officer Terry Nims, Scott County, for his dedication to enforce Iowa's waterfowl hunting laws. Nims issued 26 citations and five warnings in 2005. Along with fellow officer Jeff Harrison, Nims made a case against four individuals who were shooting waterfowl over their limit in Lee County. The individuals, three from Missouri and one from Iowa, paid more than \$3,200 in fines and had their hunting privileges suspended.

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IOWA NEEDS MORE OAKS

AMES - The mighty oak provides food and shelter to nearly 80 species of Iowa wildlife. Squirrels, deer and turkey feast each fall and throughout the winter on acorns. Even birds including quail, pheasant, blue jay, thrush, and the little nuthatch peck out the acorn meat.

Oaks are treasured for its stately growth, beautiful lumber and, of course, its acorns. A mature oak can produce more than 20 bushels of acorns in a good year, which occurs every 3 to 5 years.

"In our native woodlands, common species are bur, red, white, black, swamp white and pin oaks," said John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR's forestry bureau.

Unfortunately, according to the U.S. Forest Service, the number of acres of oak trees in Iowa are decreasing due to succession to selective timber harvesting that

encourages natural regeneration of shade tolerant maple and basswood trees. Other factors include developing land that was once forest.

The Iowa State Forest Nursery, in Ames, has oak seedlings available in two sizes for planting. Iowa landowners can order either 8 to 16-inch or 17 to 24-inch oak seedlings now, and receive them in time for spring planting. The smaller plants are available for \$42 per 100 plants. The larger plants cost \$45 per 100. There is a minimum order of 500 plants.

Landowners with only one-quarter or one-half acre to plant should consider ordering a wildlife packet that contains up to four different trees or shrubs, in units of 50. These specialty packets total 200 plants and cost \$90.

Call the State Forest Nursery at 800 865-2477 or go online at www.iowadnr.com/forestry/ for more information.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-281-5441.

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